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Q: Mr. Agsalud, where were you living on December 7th, 1941?

A: I lived in Waipahu. More specifically, it was called Armory Camp and that's a plantation housing camp in downtown... what's downtown Waipahu at that time, behind the Waipahu Theater. It was on the hillside so we had a view of Pearl Harbor at that time.

Q: How old were you then?

A: Eight years old.

Q: What do you remember of December 7th, 1941?

A: Well, if I can try to do this sequentially.

Q: Just do it any way that...

A: O.K. This is Sunday morning. I like to (I still do today, even when I was a kid) sleep late. Church wasn't until 9 or 10:00 I think and I was awakened by what I thought at that time, somebody banging on the wall of our house; a lot of vibration, which continued on. So I got up and looked out the front door and a lot of my friends and other people in the particular camp at that time, were on the road looking down into Pearl Harbor. So I went out to join them and what I saw were flashes from ships and airplanes flying over them, and somebody had said that those were British planes and that the military was undergoing maneuvers. So we were enjoying all of this, really. And now that I think back about it, a few Japanese planes flew over us because our particular camp was right below the Oahu Sugar Mill, which as I think back now, and after discussing it with others, they probably thought was a military installation, because of the two smoke stacks, and perhaps... I'm not sure of this, people said they were shot at. So, and I don't know. I don't have...

Q: From the planes?

A: From the planes. So if that was true then these planes were coming right over us, and shooting at the Sugar Mill. Of course all of this was put together later on. Uh, we didn't know there was a War on. So, we were members at that time of the Waipahu Evangelical Church, which was I think about a mile or a mile and a half from where we lived. I'm not sure if you're familiar with Waipahu Town. But to get from where we lived near the Waipahu Theater and the Waipahu Evangelical Church is where... near August Ahrens School is now. So just to show you the distance that we had to walk.

We were a plantation family now. We didn't have

transportation and so my three sisters and myself (I'm the youngest) started our regular Sunday walk to church. And we did notice a few holes in the ground or in the street, on the way to church. And at that time it didn't dawn on us, you know, what was going on.

We got into church and then we found out through the minister... and it still didn't sink into us because we had no idea what War meant at that time. And maybe for my older sisters, but for me, I had no idea. And he announced the fact that we ought to go return home because there was an attack taking place (or something to that effect). And so here we walked a mile to a mile and a half (I'm not sure how long that distance was) out in the open with planes flying over us, and ...

Q: Did they seem to be flying pretty low?

A: They were flying low from what I could recollect. Not that many; maybe two or three. I would think that these were the stray planes that perhaps lost whatever plan they had, their flight plan, or their attack plan, or what, and maybe they were just looking around Hawaii (as I look back now.) At that time I really didn't know what was going on.

But we walked back home and my father was gone. Apparently the plantation had mobilized (the plantation workers) and I didn't see him until late that night, and by that time, the plan... we had what was called plantation police and I think the Honolulu Police were coming around telling us about a "black out", (no lights and so forth.)

And so slowly then, I began to realize what was going on; especially when my dad wasn't around all this time and I just heard that they had mobilized all the men to go down to either Hickam or Pearl Harbor (I don't know which station he went to), to help out either moving the wounded and the dead or moving equipment around, or putting out fires, or something to that effect. So that was the extent of the experiences that I remember on December 7th.

I've heard a lot more later on and then I just piece it together to find out what I saw.

Q: In the days and weeks after the attack, with the institution of martial law and the "black out", how did that affect your family and your family's life?

A: Quite drastically. Um... I'll have to say I saw my first Caucasian person, maybe the next day or the following day when an Army jeep came into our camp with two or three soldiers. I'd never seen a Caucasian person in my life... I mean life, in flesh and blood. Uh... this goes to show you what kind of sheltered life we lived in the camps at that time. So that was an eye opener for me.

In terms of martial law, again, in my youth and because of the sheltered life, I suppose, that we lived in the plantation, and because our plantation was close to being feudalistic, being told what to do, where to go, where to buy your things, what hospital to go to, I guess for me it didn't mean.... it wasn't

that much of a difference that somebody else is taking over.

I think the propaganda was really good at that time. The radio was talking about War now, uh.... and patriotism, and by cooperating and doing our bit, you know, we were helping some kind of an effort. And so I think we were glad to be part of this and uh... I think for me as a person, maybe my family too, we became more aware or dragged into the mainstream of life even more now than perhaps the isolation we were living in. Because we never really bothered gathering around the radio before, to hear news broadcasts, or I can't even remember if the President of the United States came on at that time. But I do remember having meetings around the radio, and listening to news, and people talking, you know, what's going on and all of that. I think we started to buy the newspaper for the first time, because of what was happening around us.

Q: Sounds like that uh... expanded the horizons of the world of some of the people there.

A: Sure. Sure. I think as bad as WWII, or any War can be, we all know the story about how it helped the Americans of Japanese ancestry move up after they went off to the War and came back; allowed the GI Bill, to be prevalent among all these youngsters that came back out of the military. If it wasn't for the War we wouldn't have a Daniel Inouye or Spark Matsunaga today, who went to college because of the GI Bill. So in a very small way, in my own little isolated plantation camp in Waipahu, it opened the world to us, this negative thing that occurred.

Q: How did it impact in terms of relations between different groups; say, between Japanese and Filipinos, in the camp? Not only the Attack but just the beginning of the War.

A: There was emotion. There was strife. We became more aware of who the Japanese were. Unfortunately, this did occur. I don't know how it spread. When we went back to school for instance, it seemed as though the Japanese kids sort of stuck together. I don't know what their parents had told them, or what. But there probably was some shame, or maybe some (this is my assessment now... I don't know if this happened but) coaching on the part of their parents that, don't let anybody push you around because of what happened, or something like that, I guess.

But I think there was some kind of polarization taking place. Again, I can look back at it and make this assessment. But at that time it was merely uh...towards Japanese. I guess our parents and other adults who were non(c)Japanese, had caused this kind of a division.

Q: Were there any measures uh... say for example, education programs or propaganda, to counter that?

A: I can't think of any at that time. But like anything else, humans being what they are and being close to each other, the differences in ethnicity, I think disappeared after those few weeks of emotionalism, of being frightened I suppose. Then after a while, we were all playing together again, and friends were

friends again. But initially there was some kind of uncomfortableness, and maybe some teasing also. I remember some of the non(c)Japanese kids putting down the Japanese kids. There was some of that. But this is immature childishness that I think occurs....

Q: I was going to ask you, were there large numbers of troops or sailors, that moved into the Waipahu area?

A: Yes.

Q: What effect did that have on the community?

A: Again, being that young, I cannot look at it from a sociological point of view. Economically, I think we gained. I, as a youngster (for instance), I went into shining shoes, and this is much later now, from December 7th, after the troops came, but here you have these "American Boys". At that time we were a territory and mainland U.S. really didn't know what Hawaii was all about. They figured we were a foreign country, and so after I used to get big tips (300% tip). You know the shoeshine was only .10. The sailor or the soldier would leave me with a dollar bill, you know, or a quarter. And that was a big deal for us.

I remember a lot of that. Um... sociologically I think there were some of the military around, coming to church. I think it accelerated the Americanization or our particular community, to have some many mainlanders around. At that time they weren't know as mainlanders; they were known as either GI'S or hauolis, or... And uh.. it was positive, their presence.

The War effort I think was ... if this was planned we certainly didn't know about it. But we were very patriotic, and any person in uniform, or even not in uniform, if we saw a white person, he much have been with the military, and so there was this great attachment. I think is what the people in the occupied countries felt too, at the same time, now that we're talking about it. But, there was a good feeling of the military being around. It could have been the propaganda effort too that was going around, and in the schools, now that I think back about it.

Q: What do you recall about the way the War affected your education and what was taught in schools?

A: I think it opened up the schools in terms of awareness to kids, of what was going on. Certainly we became a lot more knowledgeable about Europe and the Pacific, because we now had real experiences taking place in Germany, and Italy for instance. Then on this side of the world, in China, and the Philippines. Whereas if didn't have these current events taking place at that particular time, I would think that our lessons in geography and history would have strictly been theoretical book knowledge, and no current events to relate it to. So when somebody spoke about uh... you know, the 442nd Regiment for instance landing in Sicily, and we know the brothers, or fathers, or cousins, of these people actually making that landing, it hit home more than just reading

about Sicily without that particular current event taking place. So again, the whole War was a big negative but it did make some changes in the educational process, to the positive side.

Q: Did most of the men who worked in your community, and the women who worked on the plantation, did they stay in the plantation jobs, or did they go into War work?

A: No, the men stayed on the plantation as far as I know. The wives, the spouses, my mother, for instance, worked for the military. I remember days when I was home all by myself, because my mother was working at Pearl Harbor. If you ask me what she did, I don't know. But there were a lot of Federal jobs for spouses at that time. So, you talk about in Hawaii, the prevalence of the working wife, it started with WWII, in the plantations.

Q: It sounds like a major change in the pattern of employment and family life.

A: Yes. Yes.

Q: Do you recall from... just what you remember of what went on in your community? How it affected family life?

A: Well, um... fortunately I had a mother and father that were church going and they believed in bringing the kids up, again, "the right way". They went sure we went to school and studied, and so forth.

But I became a wayward kid for awhile when there were no parents to come home to. Again, the working wife, and that's my mother at that time. Fortunately, I did not go that far off wayward. I was a juvenile delinquent. The policeman had to come to my home once for skipping school and doing some vandalism at the Mill. Now I don't want to blame my parents for that but again, as I look back, and as a parent now, I think lack of parental supervision did occur and I hate to put other families in a lower light in this case here, but there were some other families whose parents were not as astute as mine, so some of my friends got in a bad way more than I did.

I really can't... I don't know if my sisters had any encounters with the military that were around. I had heard stories, some of them had a difficult time with them. But certainly not what I hear today in terms of rape, for instance, or what you hear of any military occupation unit doing to a particular area, where they move in. I don't think there was that at all.

Q: Living in Waipahu, you're pretty close to the West Lock area of Pearl Harbor, and do you recall the explosion there in the Spring of 1944?

A: Yes I do. And was that a Sunday? It must have been, because it was during a day when I was at the movie theater. I wasn't skipping school (laughter).

Q: I was going to say, maybe you were playing hooky (laughter).

A: But I remember being in the Waipahu Theater and then these rocking explosions taking place and how dusty we all got because all the dust in the Theater, seeping in walls, fell on us. That's how explosive the event was. When we came out of the Theater, there was a lot of commotion out on the streets, ambulances going by, and the Waipahu Plantation Hospital was oh... maybe 2 blocks away from the Theater. So some of us ambled over there. That's where we saw all the ambulance going. And we ourselves, as young kids now, were mobilized to help.

Q: What did you do?

A: Um, apparently the Waipahu Hospital served as some kind of emergency facility and they had beds, folded cots, beds, mattresses, stretchers, all stored up in the ceiling and they guess they needed some manpower to move this out. And you talk about War effort and not thinking about whether I should or not. We were just asked, "We need your help boys." you know "Join us." I can't remember who was there now. I guess military was there and the local police and some others. So we just pitched in.

I remember one Boy Scout troop coming over too. I don't know how they were mobilized but we happened to be just individuals ambling around at that time. So we spent a good part of the day helping carry bed cots, mattresses, stretchers, down. I forget where, either to ambulances, or opening up.... or setting up the hospital to take care of the dead and the wounded.

And what I remember most about that event, was seeing the dead being brought in. This I did not have any experience with during Pearl Harbor; maybe my dad did. He never did tell me exactly what went on down at Pearl Harbor. But, and I can't remember details too often. I do remember seeing one body with brains blown out for instance, and I think it left some impression on many of us to be exposed to this. We were what, 8,9 years old at that time. And I remember some of the adults asking us to move the bodies and we just ran away and we never went back. So we were doing alright in moving the cots, the stretchers, the bed mattresses and so forth, but when we saw the dead bodies we said that's not for us. And I remember myself, one body with... I've never seen a human brain before; it looked like an orange you know. The part of the head was blown off and there was an orange imbedded in his head. That's how a brain looked to me at that time. It left me with a few shocking experiences.

The hospital is between school and my home, and for a while I found it real difficult walking home from school to go by that place, knowing what we saw in there.

Q: Sounds like a traumatic experience in a way.

A: Yeah. Yeah....

Q: Could you see the Harbor itself, where the LST's were?

A: No. Not from Waipahu Town. We saw the black smoke in the sky and that's all we saw. We couldn't see the Harbor, West Lock.

In fact, I didn't even know what West Lock was... what it was, till they kept talking about West Lock. I didn't know there was a West Lock and an East Lock. I guess we overlooked East Lock and West Lock is where Waipahu High School then, that's Waipahu Intermediate School today, was. But I didn't get to Waipahu High until much later. So... I didn't even know what the place looked like. All we could see was the smoke in the sky and all we experienced was, again, the shock waves from the explosion.

Q: Did they bring any of the uninjured survivors ashore into Waipahu from any of the ships that blew up?

A: That part, you know, I'm not sure. I really don't know. I can only remember moving the beds, the stretchers, and then seeing a line of dead bodies. I don't recollect any walking wounded, or wounded per say.

Q: O.K., well, do you have anything to add?

A: Uh... not really (laughter). It's.... it's an experience.

Q: O.K., well I want to thank you for taking the time to talk to me here.